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Emergency Preparedness and First Nation Communities in Manitoba

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SAFE GUARD

Emergency Preparedness and First Nation Communities in Manitoba

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Emergency Preparedness and First Nation Communities in Manitoba

Introduction

The First Nation communities in Canada possess distinctive characteristics, especially in terms of value systems, culture, economic activities and community infrastructure relative to the rest of the Canadian population. Many of the First Nation communities are also vulnerable to natural and anthropogenic hazards. Thus the development of an emergency preparedness and response system that is appropriate to these communities should be of high priority. Such a system should include periodic reviews and testing of the plan, proper training of personnel and incorporation of linkages with other systems. Development of emergency preparedness requires the input, understanding and direction of the community which it will serve.

The primary purpose of this report is to review, within the context of Manitoba, the past and current preparedness of three First Nations which have experienced an emergency. These communities shared their views through focus groups and key informant interviews. As well, information was gathered from various organizations such as Emergency Preparedness Canada (EPC), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), the Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters (MANFF) and the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization (MEMO). The information gathered was then synthesized to provide case scenarios: The Sioux Valley flood of 1995, the Rouseau River flood of 1997 and the Pukatawagan evacuation due to forest fire (1989 & 1995) (Note Figure 1).

The roles of the federal, provincial and local authority in relation to emergency preparedness will be briefly explored to set the context prior to and within the case scenarios. Self-government negotiations for First Nations are ongoing within Manitoba and within the discussions, emergency preparedness has been described as being "fast-tracked". This will be briefly explored at the conclusion of the document.

For the purposes of this project, emergency was defined as "a situation or threat of a situation which would abnormally affect the property, health, safety and well-being of a given First Nations community and which, depending on nature and scope, requires controlled and coordinated intervention on the part of several organizations. Such an emergency does not fall within the definition of normal activities carried out by regular services such as the police, fire department, or ambulance" (INAC, 1994). However, as can be seen in the various case scenarios, interpretations of an emergency may vary.

Declaration of an emergency for First Nations is also somewhat of a dilemma. Manitoba Reeves and Mayors have the legislative authority to declare an emergency within their local area. However, the Chief of a First Nation community does not have the same legal authority. In reality, however, the authority of the Chief is recognized by the federal agency, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), and the Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters (MANFF) as a valid voice for declaring an emergency within their community. This lack of formal recognition of authority seems to be the case across Canada, with perhaps one exception: "Apart from the possibility of the Alberta Safety Services Act, neither provincial nor federal

emergency legislation authorizes band chiefs or councils the right to declare an emergency on reserve lands" (Emergency Preparedness Canada, Personal Communication, 1994).

Governance Related to Emergency Response

Governance related to emergency response is tied to all levels of government. Some of the various departments are described below.

Federal Agencies and Programs

Several federal agencies are involved with emergency preparedness: some of which apply to all communities in Canada; and others which are especially linked to First Nation communities.

Emergency Preparedness Canada (EPC)

Emergency Preparedness Canada (EPC) is the federal agency whose role is to coordinate and facilitate emergency preparedness activities within and between federal departments and agencies and between federal and provincial governments.

EPC is:

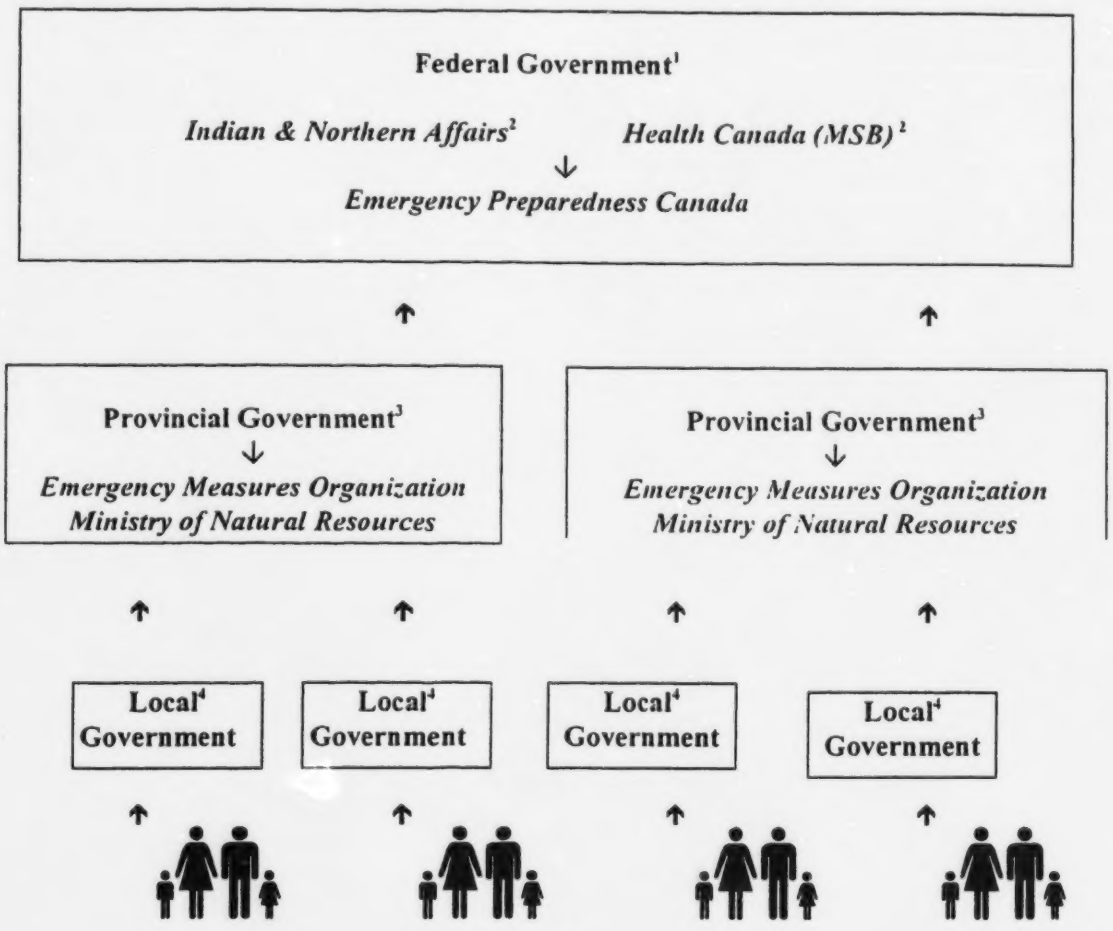
> *a small organization of approximately 80 persons within the Department of National Defence reporting to the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff. With the passage of the new legislation in 1988 and until 1992, EPC was a separate Branch of the Public Service. The Federal Budget of 1992 acknowledged the importance of the functions of EPC, but, in the interests of administrative efficiencies, rolled EPC into DND.*
>
> EPC, A Summary of Federal Emergency Preparedness in Canada, 1997.

Small regional EPC offices are maintained in the provincial capitals. EPC Regional Directors serve as the medium for the "single window" concept, whereby federal departments work through the Regional Directors to initiate activities with their provincial counterparts.

EPC clearly delineates the chain of response in Canada's emergency response system (Note Figure 1). Emergency preparedness/response are shared responsibilities of individuals, corporations and governments. Responsibilities are established by a mix of legislation, regulations and by-laws, as well as custom and practice. Direction of responsibility is as follows:

- Initial action should be the responsibility of the individual.
- In situations in which the individual cannot cope, municipal services respond. Each local authority is responsible for an emergency plan and its implementation.
- Provincial or territorial governments come to the aid of municipalities if they cannot effectively respond to the emergency. Provincial/territorial governments perform a coordinating role.
- If the emergency is within provincial/territorial jurisdiction and is outside the capabilities of the province or territory alone to manage effectively, then the province or territory requests assistance from the federal government, usually through EPC. However, EPC is not responsible for coordinating the activities of all levels of government.

Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the organizational structure of emergency response in Canada



Notes:

[1] Every federal minister, in accordance with the Emergency Preparedness Act, is required to develop and implement plans within his or her area of accountability.

[2] In regard to First Nations, INAC plays the lead role in emergency preparedness and response management. In the case of a medical emergency, Medical Services Branch, Health Canada is often involved

[3] Department names may vary between provinces and territories. Within Manitoba, any of the provincial departments may be called to assist in a coordinated provincial response to an emergency. The Department of Natural Resources assumes a vital role in emergency response situations. Manitoba Northern Affairs has an emergency plan for portions of the Province north of township 21 with the aim of providing a prompt and coordinated response to an emergency or disaster.

[4] Local governments include municipalities, counties, Chief and Council of First Nations, etc.

EPC also provides emergency preparedness training to officials from all levels of government and to private industry. It maintains a 24 hour monitoring and information centre of disasters — actual, potential or imminent — through the Government Emergency Operations Coordination Centre (GEOCC). Public awareness programs are also managed by EPC.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)

Under the Emergency Preparedness Act, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), like all Ministers of federal departments, is responsible for civil emergency situations that fall under his or her area. INAC, directly or indirectly through a third party such as a province, will assist First Nations in responding to emergencies. This responsibility includes preparing, implementing and maintaining emergency plans. These activities are normally undertaken by INAC regional directors or designate.

Among all federal departments, INAC plays the lead role for emergency preparedness on reserve lands. For INAC, it is a considerable undertaking as the department is responsible for ensuring that:

- *contingency plans are in place in First Nation communities on reserve lands and in communities on federal lands north of 60 degrees;*
- *prompt, coordinated responses are applied to affected lands and they are recovered to pre-emergency levels whenever possible; and*
- *preparation and response capabilities are community based and actively supported by the local population.*

INAC, Administration Manual, Foreword, 1994.

The responsibilities of the designated INAC senior regional manager includes ensuring adequate resourcing and that formal arrangements are in place with provincial and territorial governments for emergency planning and response. The manager should be in ongoing consultation with First Nation communities to provide the necessary advice and assistance related to emergency planning. Although current legislation does not recognize the Chief as having the authority to declare a local emergency, one of the roles of the INAC manager is to ensure that provincial/territorial governments formally recognize the authority of a band chief, as the senior elected official of his or her community, to declare an emergency when and if required (INAC, 1994).

Implementation of the above responsibilities varies across Canada as regions are given a wide latitude to manage emergency preparedness, thus accommodating regional differences. In some provinces INAC provides the funding for First Nation emergency preparedness directly to the province, which is then expected to administer activities for First Nations. Alternatively, for example, in Quebec the INAC regional office oversees emergency planning activities on behalf of First Nation communities. Within Manitoba, a third option has been utilized. INAC has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs for fire awareness programs, fire fighting activities and emergency planning.

INAC's approach to emergency preparedness must adhere to and support devolution policy regarding First Nations.

> *It is recognized that some of the issues covered could have implications for self-government. Included in the list of considerations are specific issues related to community planning: health and safety (such as the medical/health services transfer program - Health and Welfare Canada); training resources, forest fire suppression agreements; etc. It is essential that First Nations are appropriately integrated into federal, provincial and municipal planning procedure and plans. This may require First Nation interaction with the INAC Regional Coordinator, EPC, provincial/territorial authorities, neighbouring municipal authorities and others.*
>
> INAC, Administration Manual, 1994, p. 16.

Agencies and Programs in Manitoba

Provincial emergency planning is led by provincial emergency measures organizations which are very similar to the federal model, although there are differences in size, mandate and operational accountability. The level of accountability is dependent upon the diversity of Ministries assigned with the responsibility for emergency preparedness. Each province has its own emergency legislation.

Manitoba Emergency Management Organization (MEMO)

Most emergencies occur within the jurisdiction of provincial governments, and most provinces and territories have their own legislation that deals with emergency management issues. Within Manitoba the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization (MEMO) has the responsibility of "coordinating the overall provincial emergency planning, training and response operations and the administration and delivery of the Disaster Financial Assistance Program, for the safety of the residents, protection of property and the environment before, during and after an emergency or disaster. Manitoba Emergency Management Organization maintains a 24 hour/7 days emergency response capability" (Manitoba Emergency Management Organization, 1998).

Over the four year period 1989 to 1993, INAC provided funding to MEMO for personnel support to assist in developing Community Emergency Response Plans on Reserves. From 1991 to 1993, several activities resulted, including training, exercises, the development of 15 new emergency plans and ten annual reviews of existing plans.

In 1994 the Manitoba Association of Fire Fighters took the front line role of developing emergency plans for First Nation communities.

Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters (MANFF)

MANFF was formed in 1991 and is composed of and directed by Manitoba First Nation Fire Chiefs. MANFF received a renewed mandate in 1994 by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs as the First Nations organization to deliver the Fire Safety Program and related activities to the First Nations of Manitoba. Only 13 Manitoba First Nation emergency plans were in place at that

time. In 1998 the number has grown to 49, with additional plans completed for Swampy Cree Tribal Council and MANFF itself. All of these plans were created in consultation with the communities' leadership to determine the potential for a disaster and the human and physical resources available to them to respond to it.

MANFF's mission is:

> *To promote a greater awareness of fire safety and emergency preparedness on First Nation communities.*

The association's vision statement is that:

> *There will be an effective fire and emergency program established by each First Nation to protect life and property.*

MANFF entered into an agreement with the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to provide certain programs and services to First Nation communities in Manitoba. Under the 1994 agreement, it is the responsibility of MANFF to promote and develop community based Emergency Preparedness Plans and to deliver the emergency preparedness program. MANFF also is to ensure the plans are implemented in the event of an emergency, providing technical advisory services and field operations. Part of the responsibility of the association is to provide fire fighting training and fire awareness/prevention strategies and events. In addition, MANFF maintains statistics on First Nation fire protection resources and fire damage assessments.

As part of its unique approach to emergency planning, MANFF has developed its own master emergency response plan. There is no equivalent province-wide aboriginal organization like MANFF that is taking on the roles and responsibilities previously assumed by provincial or federal government departments. In addition, MANFF is in the process of identifying aboriginal agencies that might be part of its emergency response team (MANFF, 1995).

As of March 1995, MANFF had initiated numerous activities:

- hazard/resource analyses for 21 communities had been completed;
- the production of two videotapes produced for First Nations on potential disasters and on the need for emergency planning;
- the completion of an emergency response plan for Swampy Cree Tribal Council to deal with the process of being a host community during an evacuation; and
- effective coordination of five evacuations during the summer of 1994 and the set-up of a command centre with a 24-hour response capability.

In their role during emergencies, MANFF has utilized the support of various provincial and federal departments: MEMO, Manitoba Emergency Social Services, EPC and INAC. MANFF also communicated with evacuated and host communities during emergencies and coordinated Manitoba's first experience with a First Nation acting as a host community.

MANFF signs a new funding agreement with INAC each year. This agreement is for specific programs and services. However, MANFF is concerned that funding for training

personnel in First Nation communities was not included in the agreement. With the move to self-government, the members of MANFF felt that there is potential for the establishment of a Manitoba Native Fire and Emergency Services Training Academy.

Other MANFF initiatives include a fire protection survey, a Learn Not to Burn program, negotiations toward a forestry agreement with INAC and the provincial Department of Natural Resources to transfer control of this program to First Nations, and advocacy in several other areas of self-government.

Emergency Social Services (ESS)

A Manitoba Inter-Agency Steering Committee on Emergency Social Services (ESS) was established in 1990. Its role was tc promote cooperation and communication between social service organizations. Membership includes representatives from, for example, the Canadian Red Cross Society, the Manitoba Hotel Association, MEMO, Human Resources Development Canada, EPC and MANFF. ESS ensures that five essential services are provided in the event of an emergency: clothing, lodging, food, registration and inquiry and personal (special care and emotional support).

Local Authorities in Manitoba

A local authority is the council of an incorporated city, town or village; administrator and council of a local government district; or the Minister of Northern Affairs with respect to Northern Manitoba. There is no legislative recognition of the authority of the Chief and the Council in the governance of a Reserve in Manitoba. The Province of Manitoba assigns local government the task of creating emergency preparedness and response plans. Every local authority "shall establish a committee of members of the community to advise the authority on the development of emergency preparedness plans and programs" and "shall establish and maintain a local emergency response control group" (*Emergency Measures Act*, 1997, Part II, Section 8). It is unclear as to whether this legislation applies to First Nation communities as there is no provincial legislation recognizing First Nations as a local authority.

Funding Assistance

As determined by the Province of Manitoba, Disaster and Financial Assistance Policy Guidelines, disaster assistance funding will be provided by the local authority unless such funding constitutes unreasonable financial burden. Responsibility for emergency response, then, rests first with the individual, then the local authority. In most cases, municipalities can manage local emergencies, but where they cannot, the provincial or territorial government can lend assistance. Similarly, the federal government would make available its resources when requested by a province or territory. Funding assistance has an organizational and functional structure analogous to emergency response; that is, first responsibility is with the individual, then with the local authority, thereafter with other higher level authorities.

First Nations are usually funded under the provincial system with INAC supplying any portion which is not fully covered by the province. This is described in further detail under the various funding programs.

Federal Funding

The Federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA)

EPC administers the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA) on behalf of the Government of Canada.

> *The program was established to assist the provincial/territorial governments where the cost of dealing with a disaster would place an undue burden on the provincial or territorial economy.*
>
> EPC Fact Sheet, 1997.

When provincial expenditures exceed an amount equal to $1 per capita, the amount of federal assistance payable to a province follows the formula shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Federal and provincial shares in disaster assistance program

Provincial Eligible Expenditures (per capita)	Federal Share
First $1	Nil
Next $2	50%
Next $2	75%
Remainder	90%

The representative of the federal government — usually the EPC regional director — arranges for damage assessment, damage claims, and interprets the guidelines and surveys.

There are three categories of eligible costs:

- the immediate disaster period;
- post disaster assistance for individuals; and
- post disaster assistance for the public sector.

Net costs are regarded as eligible costs. Contributions made by agencies or which may result from a fundraising effort will be subtracted from the total costs.

Ineligible costs include:

- damage costs recovered through insurance or law;
- provision of costs under other government programs;
- normal risk;
- non-essential restoration;

- property owned by large business and industry;
- normal government operating budgets such as maintenance; and
- provincial taxes.

The federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements guidelines specifically deal with Indian Reserves, stating that these are the responsibility of INAC. It has been a general practice, however, for provinces to treat people of the First Nations as they treat other residents. Therefore, provinces are supposed to include disaster costs incurred on Indian Reserves in their list of expenditures. One hundred percent of these costs will be reimbursed. Damage costs to federal public works on a First Nation community are not to be included in the provincial list of expenditures as they are the responsibility of INAC.

Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP)

EPC administers the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) which, in cooperation with provincial/territorial governments, supports projects related to uniform emergency response capability. JEPP is one of the two major financial contribution mechanisms, the other being the DFAA as previously described.

While the DFAA provides federal financial assistance to provinces affected significantly by disasters, JEPP is a jointly funded federal/provincial program. Projects to do with planning and training, and to acquire emergency equipment, are cost-shared by the federal, provincial and local governments. First Nations can apply for JEPP funding through their respective province. For the purposes of JEPP, the Reserve should be treated by the Province on the same basis as a municipality, and the Reserve is responsible for its share of the negotiated cost ratio.

Provincial (Manitoba) Funding

Province of Manitoba Disaster Financial Assistance Policy

In Manitoba, disaster assistance for loss due to emergencies or disasters is administered by the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization.

The stated purpose of the Disaster Financial Assistance is:

> *To assist small businesses, certain non-profit organizations and individuals financially when the eligible costs incurred resultant from a disaster exceed an amount which they may reasonably be expected to bear on their own.*
>
> *This Policy is intended to provide assistance, to aid recovery, only!*
>
> Province of Manitoba, Disaster Financial Assistance Policy & Guidelines, 1997.

These regulations and guidelines are expected to be consistent with federal guidelines. As a result, the provincial guidelines replicate the Federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements in large part.

Table 2: Public sector costs and share arrangements

Per Capita Eligible Cost	Provincial Share	Municipal Share
$0 to $1.00	0%	100%
$1.01 to $3.00	50%	50%
$3.01 to $5.00	75%	25%
$5.01 plus	90%	10%

The cost-sharing formula used by the province for public sector costs (Table 2) incurred as a result of a disaster is adapted from the federal/provincial cost-sharing formula described in Table 1. For businesses and individuals, there is a maximum claim of $30,000 which is subject to a 20% deductible amount of approved costs. The policy and guidelines further state that the province may waive all or any portion of the municipal, business or individual's share of the disaster costs. It is noteworthy that disaster assistance claims for the 1997 Manitoba flood was increased to $100,000, and the depreciation factor was removed from structural and essential household items. **As with the federal program for disaster assistance, the provincial program does not include preventative projects designed to reduce the risk of disaster.** Eligible costs under the provincial disaster assistance program include, but are not restricted to, rescue, transportation, health, food, shelter and clothing. Livestock and valuable assets may also be removed. Special security measures and communications facilities, emergency control headquarters, and special registration and inquiry services are all eligible costs incurred by the municipal governments.

Mutual Aid System

The Mutual Aid system in Manitoba is a reciprocal pre-arranged system of emergency response and assistance that towns, villages and municipalities south of the 53rd parallel have access to through their local fire department. A Mutual Aid response can include additional fire fighting equipment for large fires that cannot be handled by a local fire department, response of specialized rescue equipment available in an area, or the response of additional personnel to a large emergency situation. If a municipality does not have sufficient apparatus and firefighters to provide everyday fire protection to the area it serves, then it is not eligible to participate in Mutual Aid.

The main focus of the system is to make a larger number of resources available in a prearranged orderly fashion at no additional cost to the town, village or municipality that required Mutual Aid assistance during the time of a large emergency situation. It comes into effect only when the fire or emergency is larger than a fire department can handle or there are more fire calls or emergencies than a fire department can respond to.

Through the facilitation of MANFF, one of the communities which participated in this project has developed a Mutual Aid agreement with two nearby communities.

The First Nation Experience

Three First Nation communities participated with this project by describing their perception of the emergency experience they went through, the sense of preparedness for emergency they had prior to the event and their sense of preparedness now.

Several discrepancies occurred during the discussions with community members including:

- Although community members and community leaders were aware that outside agencies were involved with the emergency effort, they were often unclear as to which agency had which role. MANFF and the provincial MEMO were often mentioned interchangeably. This was also true when discussion turned to development of emergency plans.
- Although all three communities have emergency plans in place, none have been passed through a Band Council Resolution by Chief and Council. It was voiced in one community that the emergency preparedness plan was seen as a political document as community members are named for certain roles and that by approving the document they would be exhibiting favoritism.
- All of the communities indicated that the Chief actually declared the emergency for their community. But, the emergency procedure was unclear. Personnel from MANFF state that the twenty four hour emergency line of MEMO is often the first contact, however all First Nation communities are transferred to MANFF for follow up. MANFF then assesses in consultation with the Chief and Council which other agencies, if any need to be involved.

Several methods were used to capture the thoughts and feelings of the First Nation people which lived through an emergency. Each had a slightly different outlook on the emergency, with some similarities across all three study communities. Pukatawagan is unique as it has experienced several emergencies. Initially it was planned to review only one of the Pukatawagan emergencies, however it was found that the people wanted to speak about the 1995 fire evacuation in comparison to the 1989 experience. A brief description is included regarding the soil and water contamination as well.

Most of the information was gathered directly from community leaders and community members, however, some clarifying information has also been included from memos, briefing notes and log book entries from Emergency Preparedness Canada and the Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters.

Mathias Colomb Cree Nation

Emergency Management in Pukatawagan Community
by Vince Stoneman, B.Ed.

Pukatawagan, Manitoba, is a remote northern community of approximately 2,000 Mathias Colomb First Nation people. It is located roughly 220 kilometers west of Thompson, or 620 kilometers northwest of Winnipeg. Over the last decade, the people of Pukatawagan have experienced four emergencies of three different types.

- In 1989 there was a forest fire that surrounded the community forcing a complete evacuation.
- In March of 1991 it was discovered that the soil in the community had been contaminated. This resulted in the closure and demolition of the school, the relocation of some homes and the nursing station and the soil was removed from under the school and various homes in the community.
- In 1995 there was another forest fire that lead to a partial evacuation of the sick, asthmatic, prenatal and elderly from the community because of the heavy smoke conditions.
- Also in 1995, the community water supply was confirmed to be contaminated, leading to tankers being brought in by rail car and water distributed to homes for bathing, cooking, and drinking.

Several definitions of emergency became evident from the conversations with the community members of Pukatawagan. The Mathias Colomb Health Authority define an emergency as "anything that could lead to serious health problems, most emergency situations pose health problems". The Chief and Council define an emergency as "any natural disaster" whereas most community members see it as "anything that affects people's lives. This would include forest fires, lack of food, water contamination, and diseases, even winter roads not being able to open to bring in food and fuel, or a power outage in the winter".

Community Experience of Emergencies

The following illustrations are based on discussions with Pukatawagan community members recollections of events. The evacuation of 1995 was often recalled in comparison to the 1989 event. Thus the focus will be the 1989 and 1995 forest fires with the water and soil contamination emergencies being briefly outlined at the end.

1989 - Forest Fire and Total Evacuation of Community

Event chronology

Well before the Pukatawagan evacuation forest fires in Manitoba were creating emergencies in other northern communities. The dry conditions and lightening storms initiated an increased incidence of fires in May of 1989— the Department of Natural Resources noted an increase of 54% over the 1988 levels. During May partial or complete evacuations happened in 15 communities with a total of 1500 evacuees. Nearly 773,689 hectares of Manitoba forestry burned in May, 1989, The fires also destroyed 20 homes, 16 cottages and at least 30 other buildings. A total of 60 cattle perished. Preparations were being made for a major disaster.

As Spring and Summer progressed, no alleviation of the conditions occurred.

July 18	The Fire Program, Department of Natural Resources, advised Manitoba Emergency Management Organization (MEMO) of the emergency conditions. MEMO alerted a Central Task Team to commence preparations for a fire emergency.
July 19	An emergency situation developed as a result of serious fire threat to the community of Cross Lake. A full scale evacuation was carried out overnight.
July 20-26	Full or partial evacuation of 24 communities was carried out in the face of fire and smoke related emergencies. In total, 23,000 evacuees were assisted and housed in 15 reception communities. A total of 152 flights of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft moved 5808 of the evacuees. At the peak of activity, 68 helicopters, 12 CL-215 water bombers and 20 other fixed-wing aircrafts were employed. Pukatawagan was one of the 15 communities which were completely evacuated.
July 27-August 9	Re-entry operations began. The fires burned 2.2 hectares of area. Notably, only six homes, four cottages, two lodges, one warehouse and a number of cabins and out-buildings were destroyed. No lives were lost and no serious injuries reported.

The following scenario was described by Pukatawagan community members through one-on-one discussions. Interviewees included the present Emergency Coordinator for the community, a Band Councillor, a Child Care Worker from 1989, a young woman who was fourteen at the time of the 1989 forest fires, several mothers from the community, the Department of Natural

Resources (DNR) radio operator, several post secondary students from the community, the Band Office clerk, as well as other community members.

Emergency Planning

When asked if there was a plan in place in 1989, several Council members stated that they had started to work on emergency planning but it was basically to formulate a guideline. Thus, nothing was written down as a plan to follow. Community members generally agreed that the DNR took the lead in emergency management during the 1989 forest fires. The Chief and Council were seen as taking a leadership role but not as the overall planners.

DNR has their own plan for dealing with emergencies. When the Band stepped in, they stepped into DNR's plan and they worked together well. The Chief and Council did have a lot of input but the real expertise and advice was given by the DNR members who had the real experience.

Many other agencies, both external and internal, extended their assistance and had a tangible role in the evacuation process. The RCMP came in from other detachments as there was no detachment locally, the Volunteer Fire Department helped with crowd control and driving, the Education Authority supplied the buses to transport people.

Memories of Evacuation in 1989

The people of Pukatawagan have a variety of recollections as to how they found out they were being evacuated in 1989. Some recall the RCMP paddy wagon or the Fire Truck with a P.A. system driving around warning everyone to be ready to leave and meet at the complex for further instructions.

It was kind of an orange cloudy day. I was at home with my two year old brother. My mom was out camping at mile 145 and my dad was out fire fighting. I did not know how close the fire was. Three of my friends came over to visit and we just happened to look out the window and notice a lot of people walking by with their kids and carrying luggage. We went and asked them what was going on and they said that we were being evacuated. I got very scared. My mom was not here and my dad was not here and I had to look after my little brother. My friend helped me pack and we just followed everyone else down the street to where they were having a meeting.

As stated by most community members, communication with potential victims and the lack of a well-defined evacuation plan were the two major problems during the emergency evacuation which resulted in chaos, confusion and delay. While people were at the complex waiting for the aircraft to come in, tension and tempers flared.

Someone heard that planes were coming in to the dock and about 300 people rushed over there to be the first ones on. People were literally running down to the dock to be first in line, sick or not. After the people got tired of waiting they all returned to the complex. Then it happened again that someone said helicopters were coming in to the ball diamonds, so once again everyone stampeded over to the ball diamonds. The helicopters did not show up. People returned to the complex demanding answers and some like myself and family went home.

The Department of Natural Resources assisted in arranging for planes and helicopters to be brought in for evacuation purposes.

We waited with everyone else for a plane to take us from this chaos. Finally a Hercules landed and it was to be for the sick and elderly first. It was amazing to see how many people developed all the symptoms of being asthmatic between the complex and the airport just so they could try to get out first. The RCMP and volunteers had to keep the crowds back. It took all evening and the next day to move people out.

It was revealed that tension built as the people waited for the air transportation. The sounds of the forest fire surrounded the community. Glowing pine cones were carried in by the wind to land with sparks in the community. The winds were also shifting, adding to the mounting anxiety.

People were piling into helicopters and one of the helicopters took off and landed again to drop some people off because it was overlouded and was overheating. It dropped some people off and took off again.

Separation of family members occurred frequently during the evacuation. Community members stated that most evacuees were flown to Flin Flon and then were taken by bus to Cranberry Portage, The Pas, Snow Lake, or wherever there was room. Connecting with family while out of the community was difficult.

We were put into groups and taken to the airport. I did not like it at all because they just put you with anyone and did not try to keep your family together. We went by plane to Flin Flon and then by bus to Cranberry Portage. When we got to Cranberry we were told that the residence was full and we ended up in a lodge far away from everyone else. I tried to go to The Pas but was not allowed. It was very boring and very scary because there was no one to talk to because I still did not know any one where I was. My little brother thought it was okay but he cried for mom and dad at night. This made me scared. Also, I got afraid because I did not know where parents were.

According to the community members, the return trip was a little better organized. The time to get everyone home was longer because the emergency authorities did not have the big helicopters or the Hercules aircraft moving people back to the community. It was estimated that it took five days to a week to get everyone back home. Some flew and some returned home by train.

1995 - Forest Fire and Partial Evacuation

Event chronology

June 2, 1995	Mathias Colomb Cree Nation was threatened by heavy smoke from forest fires. MEMO issued a forest fire alert for all areas north of the Riding Mountain National Park. MANFF sent this alert and accompanying information, including procedures for requesting help, to Chiefs of all First Nations affected.
May 30 to June 2	The first evacuation was handled by Cree Nation Tribal Health. Twenty-one Mathias Colomb residents were evacuated to The Pas.
June 12	A second evacuation was necessary.
June 13	Copies of the new Provincial Smoke Guidelines were attached to a notice to all communities which may be affected by forest fires. MANFF had been monitoring the forest fire situation since February.
June 15	MANFF advised all Chiefs and Tribal Council Fire Safety Officers (FSOs) of fires that had been caused by lightning. A copy of the Department of Natural Resources report was attached to this June 15 memo. MANFF support continued throughout the forest fire season.
June 16	MANFF provided more information to Chiefs and FSOs in several areas, including the Swampy Cree Tribal Council. A travel ban advisory was issued, and fire calls were received from Pukatawagan, Split Lake and Poplar River.
June 18	Additional fires 40 to 50 miles away were reported.
June 20	Chief and Council directed a third evacuation of medically-at-risk people and their escorts. Thirty-one people were accommodated at the Wescana Inn of The Pas.

With the assistance of MANFF, the Swampy Tree Tribal Council developed an emergency plan in May of 1995. Pukatawagan is part of this Tribal Council.

The Emergency and Evacuation Experience

The merits of having an emergency plan in the community — mainly gathered from the differences between the 1989 and 1995 forest fire related

evacuations — were recognized by the community. According to most community members the 1995 evacuation was much smoother than in 1989. Such a success could be attributed to the fact that it involved only a partial evacuation and/or that there was an emergency plan in place with a coordinator from the community.

In the 1995 forest fire case, people of the Pukatawagan community felt that a plan "of some sort" was in place and that it was being followed. This time the Health Authority played a more prominent role in organizing evacuation and advising the Chief and Council on numerous decisions.

It is usually the Health Authority that takes charge. We call an emergency alert and call everyone in for a group meeting of all of the lead people in the community. This would include the Chief and Council, Child and Family workers, RCMP, School, Volunteer Fire Fighters, and airport personnel. Everyone works together very well. The Emergency Response in this community is very good because we have gone through so many of them. Everyone has made up their own plans to deal with emergencies; Health Authority, Child and Family, RCMP, Band Office, DNR, School, and Volunteer Fire Department. There is no comprehensive master plan that incorporates everyone's plan together. But a master plan is what is needed most to save valuable time and less confusion in organizing.

The 1995 forest fire did not have the same sense of urgency as the 1989 fire. This was not a fire threat to the community, but rather a smoke threat. Evacuation was planned for the elderly, the prenatals, the asthmatic, and the sick.

This evacuation was more organized than the one in 1989 because we had a package from MEMO to follow. I do not know who made the package, but it was good to have and everything seemed to run much smoother. The Chief went up in a plane with DNR and assessed the fire and declared an emergency forwarding it to MEMO and MANFF. The fire was not a threat but the smoke in the area was very thick and causing the problems. The Chief contacted me and all other groups to have a meeting to assign vehicles and drivers, and contact people for each group such as, Health, RCMP, DNR, Band, and Child and Family. When people left for The Pas they were met by MEMO personnel and taken to their assigned placements in The Pas. Every call and radio contact had to be documented. This was our first run with an actual plan to follow, and I think it helped a great deal.

Most of the community members noticed the difference in organization when it was time to come home. However, it was also felt that there was room for improvement in the emergency process.

1991/92-Soil Contamination

In March of 1991, it was discovered that the soil under the Pukatawan school was contaminated following complaints of headaches and foul odors in the school. The Health Authority advised the Chief and Council to declare an emergency to Indian Affairs and close the school down.

I overheard people saying that someone went to the science lab at the school and looked under the trap door and found oil. Everyone started talking about contamination in school and the Chief and Council shut it down. They started doing tests underground and confirmed that it was contaminated.

While the students were out of the school building the old Band Hall was transformed into a school. Room conditions were not conducive to learning as it was very overcrowded.

As a result of the contamination the school was demolished, several houses and the Nursing Station were relocated and the soil has been removed. The classrooms are currently housed in trailors as the school has not yet been rebuilt.

A Band Councillor states:

It was discovered in March of 1991 that the grounds under the school were contaminated by PCBs and the Chief and Council had the authority to declare an emergency through our Health Authority to Indian Affairs and close the school down. By September of 1992 we had secured trailors to build a temporary school.

1995 - Water contamination

In the summer of 1995 the mothers in the community were getting concerned as there were many children being diagnosed with Hepatitis "A". Some children were breaking out in rashes and sores from bathing or even swimming.

The situation was declared an emergency by the Chief and Council but was not accepted as an emergency by INAC. One mother decided to organize a "Journey for Life" in order to bring publicity to the water contamination problem.

We were constantly told to boil the water for drinking, bathing and feeding. My children still got sick. Other children started to get sick and no one could tell us why. Another child of mine got sick with the same symptoms and was diagnosed with Hepatitis "A". I thought, 'how is this possible?' I started questioning why...The Chief and Council and the Health Authority brought in a doctor who suggested that we declare an emergency. The people from the south wanted more testing before they would do anything. I spoke with someone and asked why the people from the south do not see this as an emergency? Isn't the doctor's recommendation good enough? Why can't the kids swim in the constant flowing Churchill River? This is when I found out that our lagoon was leaking and the current was taking everything past our water intake pipe bringing everything into our homes through our tap-water. The chlorine was not effective because the capacity of the well was very low.

I began to get very mad because I almost lost two children because of the contaminated water. I ...walked to every house telling everyone why should we stand up and do something about this indignation. We met at the complex with the Chief and Council. I put into motion the idea of a Journey for Life walk from The Pas to Winnipeg to draw attention to our emergency. The whole community...were in favor of this.

According to the originator of "The Journey For Life" the walk took about five days.

Before we got to Winnipeg the Government announced that we will receive 4.6 million dollars to get the water and sewer treatment plants updated. We arrived in Winnipeg and had a meeting with the Chief and Legislature. I still disagree with the way the Government hangs on to our First Nation's money. We are still waiting to receive our funds to update our treatment plants.

According to personnel from the Mathias Colomb First Nation Health Authority water was brought in by rail through the efforts of MANFF during the immediate emergency. The Health Authority now constantly monitors the water to determine whether it is drinkable.

Preparation for Future Emergencies

The feeling of emergency preparedness is varied within the community. Some members think Pukatawagan is prepared for an emergency but this is not because they have a plan, but only because "they have been through so many of them". Suggestions on how to improve the preparedness of the community included:

- keeping the community informed and updated on emergency procedures.

- the integrating of the emergency plans to create an overall plan to prevent confusion in roles and to become better synchronized in undertaking action.
- ensuring the community has as much warning as possible whenever evacuation is going to be faced and that the warning is communicated well; and,
- developing good evacuation plans which incorporate the importance of keeping families together.

Currently, it is a multiple-party process in Pukatawagan to declare an emergency. The Chief and Council, under advisement from the Health Authority, hold an emergency meeting with all key members/agencies in the community to discuss the problem. If it is agreed on by most, the Chief declares an emergency to MEMO in The Pas or Winnipeg and then to MANFF in Winnipeg. If it is a medical emergency, Medical Services are notified and then MEMO is contacted.

The key to our plan now is that it is very important to have our own Health Authority as it makes it much easier to declare an emergency and ultimately the Chief and Council have final say. We are proud to be one of the very first in Canada to have our own Nursing Station Health Authority. This blazes a major trail for the future.

Roseau River Anishinabe First Nations

by M. Matiur Rahman, Ph.D.

The Context

Located at about 92 kilometers south of Winnipeg, the Indian Reserve at the Roseau River is a community of Anishinabe Ojibway First Nation. This reserve is located in two separate locations — the main reserve (IR2) is located at the confluence of the Red River and the Roseau River, and the other part (IR2A) is located in Roseau Rapids some 19 kilometers east of the main reserve. The whole community of 965 at the main reserve (IR2) had to be evacuated during the spring flood of 1997. Evacuees took shelter at the town of Ste. Anne. Some evacuees went to stay with friends and relatives in other places including the City of Winnipeg.

Roseau River Flood, 1997

Event chronology

April 22 — The Province of Manitoba declared a State of Emergency for the area of the province south of the 51st parallel. In late April, the province ordered all residents in the mandatory evacuation areas out of their homes.

April 24

One hundred and seventy seven Roseau River First Nation people were evacuated and registered at Ste. Anne reception centre. The evacuation was co-ordinated by MANFF. Twenty people in essential services remained in Roseau River. The Roseau River, one of the Red's tributaries, had also flooded, and was affected by ice and snow blockages. Highway #75 was open only to local traffic from south of St. Norbert to the US border.

An EPC Situation Report dated April 24 reported that INAC remains in close communication with First Nation communities. The MSB of Health Canada is also working with First Nation communities, Tribal Councils and MANFF to assess potential health impacts in affected First Nation communities....Plans are being made for the transportation and evacuation of high-risk and chronic care patients, emergency cases and other community residents as may be necessary. Officials are ensuring that adequate medical supplies and patient medications are on hand in First Nation communities. and ensuring continued safety of food and water supplies (EPC Situation Report #06, 24 April).

April 29

Roseau River was evacuated by this date with residents located in Ste. Anne and Steinbach.

May 6

By this date, re-entry and flood damage reparation to the Reserve was under consideration. INAC announced plans concerning flood recovery plan assistance. INAC would:

- provide financial assistance to First Nations for re-entry and remedial activities;
- provide technical support in maintenance of dikes until flood threat is over;
- provide liaison and support to MANFF who work directly with the First Nations in dealing with an emergency; and
- provide advice and support to First Nations in the recovery of costs through DFAA process.

Emergency Preparedness Canada.
Personal Communication (INAC) May 6, 1997

May 15

Roseau River First Nation was still an evacuated community. Manitoba ESS provided temporary

accommodations to evacuees registered with the Red Cross.

Although the Roseau River First Nation emergency response plan was drafted with the assistance of MANFF on March 21, 1996, it has not been approved by the Chief and the Council.

The Method of Study

The main objective of this section of the report is to assess the role of the decision-makers in the local First Nations government in Roseau River specifically in coping with the Red River flood of 1997. This section is based on a Focus Group Discussion. The people engaged in the group discussion were involved in some capacity with the Emergency Response during the flood of 1997. The participants in the study included councillors, the band administrator and the emergency coordinator.

The general format for the discussions was based on the following points of interests:

1. What did you do well, in managing the 1997 Flood?
2. What went wrong or could be improved?
3. What needs to be changed (planning for the future)?

People's Attitude

The Department of Indian Affairs is the federal body legislated to assist the First Nations during an emergency. Consequently, the community did not fall under the provincial Emergency Plan. Access by the community to provincial information and services was correspondingly diminished.

The attitude of people was important in determining their reactions to flood forecasts and warnings. Some members in the community engaged in wishful thinking - believing the flood would not happen. Such attitudes kept people from taking appropriate preparatory actions. While the experiences of Grand Forks did shock some into actions, denial persisted for others. For some people, there was a strong sense of denial and this was communicated to others by such actions as driving past people filling sandbags and laughing at them.

Responding to the Flood of 1997

The community established an Emergency Operations Centre in an alcohol treatment centre. The participants indicated that a site outside the flood plain would be preferable in the future.

Assistance to the community was provided by Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters (MANFF). MANFF works with MEMO when natural disasters occur in areas governed by the First Nations and in this instance served as the liaison between Rousseau River and MEMO. A member of MANFF joined the community in order to facilitate the liaison activities, provide forecasts and flood information, and report the community needs to MEMO.

MANFF worked with Roseau River in early 1996 to obtain assistance with that year's flood emergency. MANFF generated an emergency work plan for them at that time. In 1997, MANFF's assistance was crucial to the community's efforts. MANFF offered advice on what needed to be done and who should do it to Roseau River's flood coordinator, who was given more authority than either the Chief or Council during the emergency.

The interactions with MANFF were not without problems. The community felt that the information provided was inadequate at times. Communications with MANFF, which has its offices in Winnipeg, were sometimes difficult. Phones, faxes and, sometimes, personal contact were used. MANFF personnel stated that during the confusion of the evacuation, the Rouseau River Fax machine was taken off the community. Also, the 24-hour phone line established at Rouseau River was sometimes not manned. These problems added to the communication difficulties.

For a smooth flood response, people need to know what to do. It is necessary for the planners to seriously consider about how to implement an emergency plan. It was agreed that **the community needs training in how to respond to flooding.**

Evacuation to Safety

In 1979, the most serious previous flood, the community had been evacuated. Consequently, there was some expectation that it might happen this year. This expectation was reinforced, and communicated through the community, six weeks before the order to evacuate arrived. Thus voluntary evacuations occurred prior to the notice of the mandatory one.

Two hours before the official notification, people were alerted to the need to evacuate. When the order came, it was communicated in person to those who remained. Many people resisted the order. Some had not prepared for it ahead of time. With such individuals, different tactics were taken.

First, a concern for their well-being was expressed. The evacuation was for their safety; if the dike breached, it was possible they would be injured or would drown. Others had to be told that the police would come and remove them if they did not evacuate. Overall, everybody was stressed by the uncertainty surrounding the evacuation process. At the time of the crest, there were 30 people left to provide essential services for the dikes. The most frustrating problems were the

lack of financial and physical resources. For example, the community needed pumps. When the need was identified, the money for pumps was not available. Ultimately, they had to fly in pumps. A second example was offered. The community wanted to provide food for volunteers. To do so, they had to get approval from the Department of Indian Affairs.

Another major concern focused on communication problems. The problem was the absence of prompt and complete information. This problem caused several adverse effects. First, flood-related decision-making became more difficult. Second, the Band finance office was moved to Winnipeg making it harder to track resources. And third, the notification of their evacuation was delayed. When a disaster zone was declared in the Red River Valley and areas to-be-evacuated identified, Roseau River was not mentioned. The community had to find out from federal authorities that they should also evacuate. **Roseau River always seems to be caught between jurisdictions**, as they were in this case.

The Shelter in St. Anne

The evacuation location was also a concern for many members of the community. They felt like they were not treated equally or fairly. While people from other communities were housed in hotels, the residents of Roseau River were placed in an arena in St. Anne. There was no privacy, they had to sleep on air mattresses, and there were problems with the heating. People had problems cashing cheques (the community was able to resolve this problem by making arrangements with some credit unions in St. Anne). On the other hand, people relocated to St. Anne ate very well.

The arena situation was difficult. But people dealt with it well. This showed the resilience of the people and became a source of pride. Where people had relatives, they went to stay with them. Often people lived at very close quarters. This caused difficulties for some. However, the discussants pointed out that the issue was the facilities and not the people of St. Anne. The residents of St. Anne were cooperative, helpful and friendly. They tried hard to ameliorate the difficult situation that the evacuees faced.

It was pointed out by a participant that the choice of the evacuation location was made by MANFF and that this fact may not be widely recognized. MANFF was asked to find a location and identified St. Anne. The flood coordinator asked for confirmation that St. Anne has the resources needed to house the community's evacuees and received it from MANFF.

In a previous emergency, the community had been evacuated to the military facility at Portage la Prairie. Families had their own space. The community was together and isolated somewhat from outsiders. The sense was that this previous situation was less arduous on members of the community.

Experience with Support Service Agencies

The perception of receiving mixed signals was raised repeatedly. MANFF, MEMO, the provincial Department of Natural Resources and the military were among the organizations that were perceived as sending the mixed signals. The military forcefully pushed for the evacuation of the essential people who were monitoring the flood. This was not perceived to have occurred elsewhere. When members of the community went to Altona for financial help, they were refused the same treatment as other evacuees. They were told that they would have to go to Winnipeg to make arrangements. Apparently, at some previous point in time, discussions between the federal Department of Indian Affairs and the Red Cross produced an agreement that the Altona centre would not be responsible for financial assistance for evacuees from Roseau River. Roseau River residents were not informed of this agreement, nor where they asked to participate in the discussions.

Disaster Financial Assistance

The cultural uniqueness of the Roseau River Anishinabe First Nations seems to be incompatible with the Recovery programs that were put in place. As a First Nation, the community "owns" all the buildings. Families occupy residences, but do not have ownership of them. Consequently, it was difficult for a family to get assistance in repairing the house in which they lived because programs were designed to help property owners.

In the community, there is a belief that under the Disaster Financial Agreement, the federal government unloaded its financial responsibilities to the First Nations onto the province and that the province then takes a percentage of the money. The local MLA indicated that the province has no responsibility in the situation. While the community does not think he is correct, they agree with the sentiment: the federal government should be working directly with the community.

Currently, Rousseau River is working directly with MEMO on issues related to damaged homes and goods. MEMO will not give them 100% of their costs. They are only getting 80-90% of their depreciated costs. The Department of Indian Affairs is supposed to cover the shortfall.

As the waters receded, and people started to return to the community, there was concern that the difficulties experienced in interacting with authorities would continue and these stresses would be compounded by post-flood trauma. The Salvation Army offered psychological services. The Salvation Army wanted to go house-to-house to provide the service. They were advised that it would be better if an office was opened and people informed of the available services. No additional interactions occurred. A phone call was made to the Salvation Army but it was not returned. Subsequent events have convinced the community that **people trained in dealing with post-flood trauma are needed.**

Preparing for the Future

At the end of the meeting, the participants offered suggestions as to what they needed to do to improve their ability to deal with another major flood. Some of these ideas are found in the paragraphs above. The rest are listed below.

- The community needs to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the federal government, provincial government, MEMO, the Red Cross, and Salvation Army. At present there are confusions among these. The community feels that they are being shuffled between levels of government.
- The community needs a clear plan for the financial resources for all phases of emergency operations.
- The community needs access to heavy equipment. This would include bulldozers, front-end loaders, back hoes, tractors, dump trucks, and heavy pumps.
- The community needs to complete the modifications to the permanent dike so that it meets the new standards.

Unique challenges faced the residents of Roseau River Anishinabe First Nations. Cultural practices, governance, and financial procedures differ from those found in the other valley communities. Consequently, there was less opportunity to benefit from experiences of other communities on the flood plain (Tait and Rahman, 1997). Considering the resources that were lacking, the participants agreed that the community did a great job in dealing with the emergency. Moreover, despite the hardships and misfortunes, the community benefited in that people came closer together in order to cope with the flood.

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Sioux Valley First Nation

by C. Emdad Haque Ph.D.

Donna Epp R.N., B.Sc.N.

The case of the Sioux Valley First Nation community is of particular interest to policy makers since it has taken the lead on several initiatives within the province of Manitoba. In 1995, for example, this community assumed control of their on-reserve health programs through the federal Health Program Transfer initiative. As well, Sioux Valley has been independently negotiating for self government with the Canadian federal government for the past six years.

Surrounded by rolling hills, the Sioux valley is located along the Assiniboine River floodplain in the southwestern part of Manitoba. Inhabited by about 1,107 people (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1996) of the Sioux Valley First Nation, the community is situated along the provincial trunk highway 21, eight kilometres north of provincial trunk highway 1 and 45 kilometres west of Brandon. Although some overflow from the Assiniboine River has historically been common, occurrence of the damaging floods were not frequent. However, the 1995 flood was of much greater scale and required an emergency declaration and assistance from both the provincial and federal authorities.

Event chronology

April 21, 1995	Initial contact with Sioux Valley occurred when the health coordinator for the band notified the Regional Environmental Health Office (REHO) of potential flood conditions. A state of local emergency was declared by the Chief and the Council of Sioux Valley when very high water levels threatened the pumping station. The station was sandbagged by community members and deemed safe for the time being. The community no longer had potable water on-reserve, so water was trucked into the community.
April 22	MANFF reported on the flood situation in Sioux Valley.
April 22 and 23, 24	People from about 15 homes were evacuated from Sioux Valley First Nation. Those evacuated were sent to a hotel in Brandon. The water level at that time was at 1 metre above the Highway 21. Sandbagging and diking had been completed at 2 metres above the highway level where needed.

April 26

A status report noted that the two main supply wells to the water treatment plant were inundated by flood water. The bridge on PR #54 was also flooded, inhibiting access to the Reserve from Number 1 Highway to the south. The Reserve now had one access only. Evacuees at this time numbered 37.

MANFF took the lead role in emergency operations. Medical Services remained in daily contact with MANFF. The Sioux Valley Chief requested MSB "to provide an on-site water quality monitoring/testing process for the duration of the flood" (EPC, Personal Communication, 1995).

April 26

Assistance was provided by the water treatment plant designer and builder, J.R. Cousins & Associates. The company was in constant contact, "advising them on control procedures to minimize damage to the plant" (EPC, Personal Communication, 1995). The Environmental Health Officer continued to visit the community as necessary, and communication between Sioux Valley officials and MSB was maintained. Of main concern was a safe water supply, and monitoring of potential communicable disease was intensified during the emergency.

April 28

The Sioux Valley Chief and other First Nation officials met with the department of INAC to discuss issues pertaining to the flood situation at Sioux Valley. The Chief was concerned that no one from INAC had yet visited the Reserve during the flood, and that considerable costs had been incurred and funding was needed to pay the bills.

At the time of this meeting, the Senior Citizens Home and some residences were protected from flooding as Highway 21 serves as a natural dike. The personal care home had been on bottled water for a month. The PCH facility remained above water, but at projected peak levels, it would be cut off from the main part of the Reserve.

School reopened on the 26th, but two children were sent home because of stomach aches. An MSB nurse and a doctor were on-reserve by the end of the week. A soup

kitchen in the school gymnasium was operated by the volunteers from the Reserve. The City of Winnipeg provided a mechanical sandbagger which could fill 5000 bags in one hour.

The sandbagging at the water treatment plant was meant to accommodate the additional 18 inches of water which was anticipated by May 6. Diking around 60 to 70 homes was completed, but 12 homes were lost to flood waters. A total of 37 band members already evacuated to Brandon were being moved to Brandon University.

MANFF's role was to provide daily advice, coordination and other assistance. It also made payments to suppliers for items such as portable water jugs and hip waders when suppliers refused to ship on credit. A flood summary report from the Manitoba regional office of EPC dated May 2 noted that MANFF and Manitoba Emergency Social Services (ESS) would be looking into long term housing for residents whose homes would need flood damage reparation.

With the assistance of MANFF, Sioux Valley completed an emergency response plan in November of 1994. It was last updated in 1998. It has not been approved by Chief and Council.

The following scenario was reconstructed through discussions, in focus-group or personal interview format, with the current emergency coordinator at Sioux Valley, the councilor with the portfolio of emergency preparedness, the person in charge of the soup kitchen of the local school and several community members who were evacuated from their homes due to flooding. Further details were provided by the Manitoba Association of Native Fire Fighters (MANFF).

Flood Warning for 1995

Although a major flood had not occurred for many years prior to 1995, the spring runoff tends to initiate cause for concern in Sioux Valley, especially in the years of heavy accumulated snow. In 1995, the spring moisture reports in March began to herald an impending emergency. Early in March, the MANFF officials advised the Chiefs of the First Nation communities along the Assiniboine and Red Rivers of the potential for flooding. The spring runoff in and around the Assiniboine basin started at the end of April and the Chief of the Sioux Valley First Nation community declared a state of local emergency on April 21, 1995.

The authority of the Chief was recognized by the provincial (MEMO) and federal organizations (i.e. INAC, EPC) related to emergency management and assistance from these organizations was immediately deployed. Manitoba

Emergency Management Organization (MEMO) coordinated provincial actions through the Interagency Emergency Planning Committee which includes groups such as the Emergency Preparedness Canada (EPC), the Department of National Defense (DND), MANFF and the RCMP. Personnel from MANFF state that they were the coordinating body for the duration of the flood. The positive and immediate response from the emergency organizations, particularly in terms of the Chief's declaration, was an impetus for the local authority to face the disaster boldly. A considerable degree of self-confidence and community cohesion led the local authority to undertake rapid emergency measures.

The councillor in charge of emergency preparedness suggested that if the federal/provincial agencies had not recognized the Chief's authority, Sioux Valley would have taken matters into their own hands by borrowing the money to manage the diking and other preparations necessary to prevent or reduce the damage to the community. Discussions to gain reimbursement from the government agencies would have occurred following the handling of the emergency.

Emergency Measures and Experience During the Flood

The second crest of the Assiniboine River discharge occurred one week following the onset of spring runoff, mainlydue to the opening of the Shellmouth Dam. Consequently, the flood threat led to an emergency situation at the Sioux Valley community. An independent contractor with past flood experience was hired by the Band to coordinate the emergency measures. He was placed in charge of emergency management including communication, sand bagging, truck driving and material management. Further technical assistance was provided by MANFF. The City of Winnipeg provided a mechanical sandbagger which could fill 5,000 bags in one hour.

Initial measures were directed at sandbagging the pumping station, which supplied a substantial number of houses on the Sioux Valley community with water, and the threatened houses. Also, many of the community wells became contaminated as the flood continued: backwater effects, ground water pressure, seepage — all aggravated flood threats to the community. As an emergency measure, trucking of clean potable water was arranged from outlying communities. However, as the flood mitigation efforts continued, Sioux Valley community began to use their own water trucks, filling them with water from a community well on the reserve. This community well was connected by a pipeline to the pump station to filter the water. The Regional Environmental Health Office borrowed an incubator from Ebb & Flow Reserve, and the West Region Tribal Council Water Quality Analyst provided the necessary equipment and expertise, from the laboratory at Rolling River Reserve, for the duration of the emergency.

A deep sense of human compassion and human-resource potential were apparent in the emerging voluntary activities. The emergency coordinator urged the local leaders, and the Chief and Council to mobilize local people.

They asked me and I said I would like to look after the pump house, pump rentals and pump repairs. It was an experience where people learned.

A lot of our young people are mechanically inclined they just don't have the opportunity to show it. In this case they were able to come forward and say "Hey, I know how to do that!" It was really a lot of fun!

A sense of camaraderie developed during the sand bagging efforts. A soup kitchen was established in the school gymnasium, operating approximately 20 hours a day, to provide meals and coffee to the sandbaggers, truck drivers and visitors to the community. These efforts were spearheaded by a community leader with no assistance from an outside agency. The initial number of volunteers to be fed was around 25 and grew to 150-200 during the peak of the flood fighting efforts. People from many neighboring communities joined the volunteer force. They included members of a Hutterite Colony, two other First Nation communities and many non-native families.

As the school children needed their gymnasium back, the Band Hall, a large open building with a kitchen, was equipped with extra refrigerators, stoves and freezers and the soup kitchen was moved. This equipment is now a permanent part of the Band Hall.

Three houses "got caught up" during the peak of the flood (April 22, 23, and 24) and evacuation began. Members of 15 houses in total were evacuated: 11 families moved to a hotel in Brandon and others chose to stay with relatives. Available local shelters could not be used because of lack of necessary appliances and infrastructure. Several people also required evacuation due to contamination of water from the backup due to ground pressure and seepage from septic fields. Continuous vigilance was required in an attempt to keep the houses pumped out.

One person described moving into an abandoned home which had belonged to her mother. The house was small and run down with no plumbing. However, the person wanted to keep her family in the community as it was conducive to work and school. In retrospect, she felt that it was the right decision on her part to try to be within the community rather than deal with a long term evacuation.

We were told in the early evening by a councillor that we may have to evacuate. If my son had not gone out to play we would not have known that the water was coming into the yard. We left at 11:00 at night. If we had waited until morning we would have had to have been evacuated by boat.

By April 26, the bridge over provincial trunk Highway 54 was flooded, leaving Sioux Valley in a partially isolated situation. The state of partial isolation lasted approximately three weeks. Community residents who needed to travel to Brandon three times per week for dialysis were evacuated to Brandon. By this time, the total evacuees numbered thirty-seven.

Use of local resources and application of innovative ideas in disaster mitigation were noticed. For example, by April 28, the pump station was completely surrounded by flood water and it was only accessible by boats. A 24-hour vigil was held within the fence line around the station to keep the pumps working and the diking intact. Many teenagers often took the night shifts, bringing electronic games with them and having tournaments. When strong winds causing waves, the battle to retain the pump station became more difficult. Plywood was brought in by boat and attached to the fencing in an innovative way.

It is quite amazing how a person can think at a point of disaster or time of need. For instance we needed to get a great big pump to the pump station. We were told there was no way we could do it without a big machine and it was impossible to drive a big machine through the water because it would damage the seals and the differential. So we took two row boats and made a makeshift barge with two by fours and plywood. We set the pump on and it didn't sink. They were quite amazed.

Security had been a major issue concerning emergency management, and in response, the community members established a volunteer-based "night-watch" program. These volunteers were involved with multiple duties including bringing potable water to people in need or dispatching water delivery service, checking on the older people in the community or those with known illness, watching the water level and checking road conditions.

Success in adjustment of evacuees to new settings is a major challenge for decision-makers as well as for disaster-victims. A global literature survey suggests that cultural, ethnic and racial conflicts between the receiving communities and refugees are not uncommon. The experience of the 1995 Sioux Valley flood conforms to these findings. The hotel in Brandon which housed the evacuees announced to the evacuees after approximately a week of stay that the rooms were needed for "other purposes". All evacuees (37 persons) were moved from the hotel to the Brandon University dormitory.

We had to go into the hotel and argue to keep these people for a few more days. And this was all being paid for, these people were being paid for to stay in these rooms. I guess people in these hotels were complaining that there were Indians all over the place and that type of thing. We were more or less arguing against racism.

On the reserve, accommodations were being made ready to receive the evacuees back home. Either abandoned houses were being repaired and made "livable" or relatives were renovating to accommodate some of the returnees. After three weeks, evacuees returned to the community as water began to recede. Returnees felt that finally their distress was over; children were happy in particular to be back to their own area or home.

Post Flood: Cost and Cleanup

The Sioux Valley First Nation community attempted to procure all 1995 flood mitigation cost, both from the provincial and federal agencies. This was the first request in recent history for financial compensation related to a disaster to outside agencies. The community leaders felt that the federal government, through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), gave Sioux Valley the "brush off" by either deferring the process or referring their request to the provincial agencies.

We were into Winnipeg a number of times to argue with INAC for funding and that was a hard task. It got into heated argument situations where they would simply try to go around the issue and eventually say "You can only take so much, that is all we're going to give you, that is it, forget about it, and if you don't want to take it that is up to you."

Post-flood adjustments were not an easy task for both the local authority and residents. Most residents lacked knowledge for the clean-up of homes and yards, and had to rely on external assistance.

My yard was horrible...it took a while for the smell to go away. They (emergency management people) had to spray in the crawl space.

Post-flood cleanup was a lengthy task and community members had to wait weeks. In some cases, repairing of evacuees' houses took several months. Consequently, the soup kitchen was kept in operation from April to August. Cleanup consisted of more than housing repair. Debris from the flooded land had to be removed and many of the flooded buildings had to be sprayed for insect infestations. As noted above, community members were assisted by outside agencies in taking appropriate precautionary measures for the clean up operations.

It was reported that, at the onset of the flood disaster, INAC instructed the Sioux Valley local authority to determine and keep records of all of their emergency and flood mitigation costs, ranging from purchase of the sand bags to the wages by hours of work. Although INAC granted an advance of $500,000 to the Sioux Valley local authority to cover expenditures other than services and materials provided by other government programs, the community members felt that the amount was not sufficient at that time. In view of accounting difficulties at Sioux Valley, INAC also agree to pay the cost of extra accounting personnel in the emergency disbursements. At the request of INAC, the Manitoba Disaster Assistance Board appraised the damage, and an additional $400,000 was granted as disaster assistance. Perception of the effectiveness of such compensation and cost recovery vary considerably among the community members. One member felt that cost recovery from the province ended up in proper use whereas an evacuee mentioned that she did not receive any compensation even though she did put in a claim to the Band.

Plans for Future Emergencies

Prior to the 1995 flood there seemed to be a distortion in perception which resulted in an underestimation of risk. Such distortion was noticed not only among community members but among the leaders as well. Waiting for the onset of disaster was a common practice reflecting avoidance or denying the prevailing risk.

A friend of mine got flooded out really badly. Everything in the basement was destroyed. I told her...we knew we were going to be flooded out, we just didn't know when. If I were you I'd move everything upstairs. They waited so long for repairs. They did a lot of cleaning themselves because they wanted to get back into their house. But they waited a long time for the other things...like getting the gyprock replaced.

Should a flood happen in the future, Sioux Valley appears to be much more prepared due to the experience gained from the 1995 flood and increased awareness of the risk of living in a floodplain. In 1991, an emergency plan was formulated with the assistance of the MEMO. The plan was approved and adopted by the Chief and Council in 1991. A copy of this plan was available on the shelves of the Band Councillor. Although this plan was modified in 1992, it was outdated when the 1995 flood hit and, thus, was not fully effective.

According to MANFF an emergency plan was developed with Sioux Valley in 1994. This plan was not mentioned in discussion with the community members.

Following the 1995 flood, it was recognized by the Sioux Valley community that a functional emergency plan was required. Within the same year an Emergency Committee was formed which consisted of personnel from the school, the personal care home, the Financial Clerk, and the Health Program. This group was joined by the MANFF to draft an initial emergency preparedness plan.

The plan, initiated through consultation between the Sioux Valley authority and through MANFF, is continually being updated. Emergencies that do not necessarily fit into the definition of an emergency according to the Emergencies Act have been embodied into the overall emergency plan. For example a 24-hour crisis team has been organized and built into the emergency plan for crisis intervention including such things as suicide prevention. The Emergency Committee continues to meet on a regular basis to consider other contingency plans such as Crime Watch or Neighborhood Watch, examining the feasibility of getting an ambulance in the community and developing a ward system within the community to determine responsibility during an emergency.

There appears to be no distinction made in the plan between natural disasters and other types of emergencies. To date the Chief and Council have not adopted the Emergency Plan but the current emergency coordinator stated that individuals identified within the plan are aware of their roles and are willing to

assume those roles defined by the emergency plan. One community member stated that representatives from Sioux Valley were invited to the Interlake to assist them with development of their plan.

Several features or programs which were initiated during the 1995 flood continue to serve the community. For example the security program established during the flood has been continuing for community events. Also, lasting effects on awareness of disaster risk and necessity for preparedness are mirrored in the following actions.

- In 1997, a total of 30,000 sandbags were purchased and are stored for possible use in the future.
- Two new water trucks have been purchased and are available for use.
- Water testing equipment has been procured and is being used on a regular basis to monitor water quality and detect water contamination.
- Further, the nurses in the personal care home are prepared for mobilization in meeting emergency needs.

In the discussion with community members, emphasis was given to developing closer linkages between the neighboring communities to receive assistance in case of a disaster. Rather than using shelters in larger towns and cities where evacuees face enormous difficulty in terms of adjusting to unfamiliar social environment, use of shelters in smaller neighbouring towns and communities (e.g., Rivers, Hamiota, Kenton) were recommended. It was felt that initiative and ongoing communication would be necessary to develop mutual understanding to institute such rural programs.

The community members also recognized that emergency training is a vital component in emergency preparedness. Local trainees need to be recruited for developing local human resource capacity. As knowledge, technology, and experience accumulate and vary significantly over time, their training should be upgraded on a continuous basis. Recommendations were made to formulate learning programs, workshops, and other awareness increasing forums to engage local residents with emergency and disaster preparedness.

Training is never enough. Training is something that we can have in so many different ways, continuously not just to end one program, one project or one course. It should be an ongoing thing at all times.

Overall, the feeling of the community was that the flood was a devastating event which the community faced with resilience and unity. It continues to be a source of pride that the pumping station was saved in the face of almost overwhelming odds. Although there is lasting damage to the community which

continues to affect people's lives today, there was also the spark of community spirit and initiative that also continues to affect people's lives today.

Common Issues Identified

The three First Nation communities studied have shown commonalties in several areas of emergency experience. These common issues, as elicited by the focus groups and community members can be summarized as follows.

- Without a well-defined emergency plan, with specifications on duties, responsibilities and scope, community in general becomes confused and uncertain at times of emergency. The confusion regarding plans which are currently in place indicate, as well, that community acceptance or "buy in" is necessary to make the plan effective.
- Separation from family, kin and community members aggravates strenuous situations during emergencies. In addition, the experience of being separated during emergency causes post-event trauma and depression.
- All communities perceived "unfair" treatment while evacuated to outside the community environment. This aggravated the trauma and stress of emergencies. It was felt that avoidance of evacuation to outside communities should be preferred in the formulation of emergency plans.
- All three communities experienced serious communication problems between agencies, local authorities and community members.
- Information provided concerning impending risk, preparedness (what to do?), where about of family members and kin was inadequate, delayed and consequently less effective. It was found that a prompt and easy accessibility to information would lead to efficient management of emergencies.
- Frequent experience of emergencies led to better understanding of the risk and resulted in better preparedness.
- Strong resilience and community cohesion were shown during the emergency events, implying their potential for further prevention and mitigation of emergency loss.
- Knowledge and training on emergency preparedness and response is recognized as grossly inadequate. The study revealed that training is needed at two levels: emergency management personnel to execute and manage events, and household, First Responder level to prepare and respond during the event.

First Nation Self Government

Discussions regarding First Nation Self Government have been ongoing for years. In 1991, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established. Its mandate was to "delve into every aspect of Aboriginal life in Canada, to explore the relations between Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian state, and to make recommendations about how the conditions faced by the Aboriginal Peoples could be improved" (J.H. Hylton, 1994). In 1993, the broad political understanding from the Liberal Red Book was "The Liberal government will be committed to gradually winding down the Department of Indian Affairs at a pace agreed upon by First Nations,

while maintaining the federal fiduciary responsibility" (The Dismantling of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, The Restoration of Jurisdiction to First Nations People in Manitoba and Recognition of First Nation Government in Manitoba: Framework Agreement, 1994).

Manitoba, with the highest proportion of First Nation people in its population compared to other provinces, has been at the forefront of the self government initiative. As one of the first moves toward self-government, a Framework Agreement was signed between the Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Federal Minister of Indian Affairs on December 7, 1994. All sixty First Nation community Chiefs also signed this agreement.

This Agreement outlined a Framework for the "dismantling of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the restoration of jurisdictions to First Nation peoples in Manitoba and recognition of First Nation Governments in Manitoba" (The Dismantling of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, The Restoration of Jurisdiction to First Nations People in Manitoba and Recognition of First Nation Government in Manitoba: Framework Agreement, 1994).

It is stated in the Workplan for this Framework that:

> *Wisely executed, this endeavor will attain historic dimensions. It is, however, a major and highly complex undertaking and an enormous challenge for both Government and First Nation leadership. While attempts have been made in the past to establish practical examples of aboriginal self-government, none have been as comprehensive as this. This is not a question of a single First Nation taking control over its own affairs but of sixty First Nations working in concert. This is not a question of displacing the powers of DIAND alone; but of displacing the functions of other federal departments associated with First Nations. Most complex of all will be the creation of fully functioning First Nation Governments in Manitoba.*
>
> The Dismantling of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, The Restoration of Jurisdiction to First Nations People in Manitoba and Recognition of First Nation Government in Manitoba: Workplan, 1994

Self Government and Emergency Preparedness

Within the Manitoba First Nations Workplan for self-government three projects were to be expedited. One of these was the transfer of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Fire and Emergency Services Program to First Nations Government within Manitoba. It was recognized in the Workplan that a formal Contribution Agreement was in place with MANFF to deliver services for 1994/95. Legislative/ jurisdictional and program identification/development were the items which needed to be addressed in order to transfer this program to full First Nation control.

Barriers to Change

Although Manitoba moved forward with a Framework Agreement to dismantle the federal Department of Indian Affairs, little progress has occurred towards making self-government a reality. Some very real barriers need to be overcome to make the leap to a new order. Some of those barriers include:

1. Financing of First Nation governments will require adequate funding which will need to be addressed through enabling federal legislation. Provincial bodies are concerned about off loading of federal responsibilities and increasing financial stress on them. First Nations are concerned that adequate funding will not be available. Thus, the financing of self government remains to be a difficult issue.

2. Aboriginal communities continue to be plagued by social problems that are somewhat due to the legacy of a century of oppression . Within Manitoba, statistics indicate that "status Indians use of health and social services is higher than that of the average Manitoban" (Manitoba Northern Affairs, Native Affairs Secretariat, 1996). Thus, Native community leaders tend to be overtaxed by current issues and are ill-equipped to take on the added responsibility of self-government.

3. As mentioned at the beginning of the this discussion self-government is an enormous challenge and in many ways an elusive concept "subject to varying, sometimes contradictory, interpretations" (J. H. Hylton, 1994). A convergence of vision between the parties will have to occur in order to move self-government from concept to reality.

4. Jurisdictional issues continue to be a dilemma. For instance, within Manitoba there is provincial legislation and bodies which work towards emergency preparedness. First Nations, under the provincial law, are not recognized as being local authorities. Thus, there is a need for addressing jurisdictional issues to clarify legal authority.

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SAFE GUARD is a national information program based on partnerships and aimed at increasing public awareness of emergency preparedness in Canada.

The Safe Guard program brings together government, private and voluntary organizations that are part of the emergency planning, response and recovery community.

The triangle is the international symbol of emergency preparedness. The jagged line evokes the maple leaf, the internationally recognized symbol of Canada. The amber yellow colour is a sign of caution and warning.